

# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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## MARYLAND BIRDLIFE STAFF

### Editor

Chandler S. Robbins, Patuxent Refuge, Laurel, Md.

### Art Editor

Irving E. Hampe, 5559 Ashbourne Rd., Baltimore 27, Md.

### Associate Editors

Miss Adele Malcolm, 204 Washington St., Cumberland, Md.

Mrs. R. B. Green, 1016 Hamilton Blvd., Hagerstown, Md.

Rodgers Tull Smith, 101 E. Church St., Frederick, Md.

Mrs. Wm. A. McComas, 522 Rock Spring Rd., Bel Air, Md.

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rect to Editor Chandler S. Robbins,  
Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, Md.

# THE SEASON

September and October 1950

Temperatures in September averaged about one degree below normal, but the deficit was due more to cool days than to cold nights. Minimum temperatures were close to the seasonal average except for brief spells from Sept. 5 to 7 and Sept. 24 to 27. The principal migration waves occurred during these cold snaps and to a lesser extent from Sept. 16 to 18 when the mercury dipped only 2 or 3 degrees below normal. The bulk of September migrants departed during the cold period from the 24th through the 27th, but those stragglers which were still present at the close of the month were confronted by mild weather throughout October and many lingered to very late dates. Minimum October temperatures averaged about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  degrees above normal; they remained remarkably constant throughout the month instead of gradually becoming lower as the month progressed, and with 4 exceptions stayed above the daily averages. Most stations in the eastern part of the State reported no frost during the entire period. These factors undoubtedly account for the large number of late departure records of insectivorous birds.

Loons, Waterfowl. A very early Common Loon was seen on Sept. 8 in the Chester River (Judge and Mrs. Henderson), and another was recorded on Deep Creek Lake on the 16th (Robbins). Waterfowl, in general, were late in arriving, although scattered individuals appeared ahead of schedule as usual. Three Canada Geese at Lloyd's Landing on the Choptank on Sept. 28 (Hendersons) and 6 over Patuxent Refuge on the same date (Robbins, Seth Low) were examples of very early migrants. On Oct. 29 Seth Low and Jane Tuttrup observed one Hutchins' Goose in a flock of 29 Canada Geese at Triadelphia Reservoir. A small flock of Brant seen over Towson on Oct. 18 by the Richard Coles was not only early, but also an unusual record for that part of the State. Cornelius W. Wallace and Steel Webster discovered 5 Blue Geese and one Snow Goose at Blackwater Refuge on Oct. 13, the earliest arrival date on record for either species. Thomas A. Imhof identified the first European Widgeon of the season at Edgewood on Oct. 22. The White-winged Scoter was more common than usual in Chesapeake Bay, arriving in good numbers early in October. The Hendersons counted 18 at Bloody Point on Oct. 6, 10 in Eastern Bay on the 7th, and 270 at Kent Island and Eastern Bay on the 8th.

Hawks. This was a good year for the Golden Eagle, a very early bird being identified on Sept. 17 at Foxville Tower (Robert Beaton and Allen Rhode), and a high count of 3 being obtained on Sept. 24 at Monument Knob (Ernest G. Baldwin). A flock of fifteen very late Broad-wings were observed at Monument Knob on Oct. 21 by

Dr. R. S. Stauffer.. Three Duck Hawks at Ocean City on Sept. 12 (John H. Fales) were early. The results of the cooperative hawk counts will be given in detail in a future article.

Ring-necked Pheasant. A female Pheasant seen on Gibson Island by Mr. Knight is the first local record since 1941. Another Pheasant heard from Roth Rick fire tower on Sept. 17 (Robbins) is also of interest in view of the small number of records from southern Garrett County.

Shorebirds. John H. Buckalew and E. O. Mellinger counted 17 Knots on Assateague Island on Sept. 17, and 24 were seen at Ocean City on Sept. 10 (M.O.S.). As usual, there were several reports of Godwits; high counts were 2 Marbled Godwits and 6 Hudsonians at Assateague Island on Sept. 17 and 3 Marbleds and 6 Hudsonians on the 24th (Buckalew and Mellinger). Interesting inland records included a Red-backed Sandpiper at Triadelphia Reservoir on Oct. 29 (Seth Low, Jane Tuttrup) and a Semipalmated Sandpiper at Deep Creek Lake on Sept. 16 (Robbins). A Northern Phalarope which was very closely observed at Gibson Island on Sept. 20 by Mrs. Tappan and Mrs. Henderson is the first definite Maryland record away from the coast.

Jaegers, Gulls and Terns. Two adult Pomarine Jaegers studied by 20 observers on the Sept. 9 sea trip 13 miles off Ocean City furnished the first State record for this pelagic species (Low, Robbins, etc.). Laughing Gulls reached a peak of 150 at Middle River on Sept. 9, then rapidly dropped to only 5 on the 24th (Willis). At Gibson Is., an extraordinary concentration occurred after the Sept. 14 storm, when 1,000 birds were estimated by Mrs. Henderson. The last 2 Gull-billed Terns were observed at Ocean City on Sept. 14 (John H. Fales). New Forster's Terns were seen after Sept. 20, although Imhof observed a few at Edgewood through Oct. 28. Edwin Willis saw his last 3 Common Terns at Middle River on Sept. 8. Four Least Terns seen on the Sept. 9 Ocean City trip were the last stragglers of that species. Black Terns were present on Assateague Island until Sept. 17, when Buckalew and Mellinger counted 25. Royal Terns were more abundant than ever before in the Ocean City area; a conservative estimate of 50 was obtained on the M.O.S. boat cruise down Sinepuxent Bay on Sept. 9, and on the 17th Buckalew and Mellinger recorded 69 on Assateague. Caspian Terns were regular but uncommon in the Middle River area until mid-September (Willis), and 2 were noted on Gibson Island, Sept. 14-15 (Mrs. Henderson). The highest count at the coast was 20 on the Sept. 9 cruise down Sinepuxent Bay.

Goatsuckers, Swifts and Hummingbirds. Numerous small flights of Nighthawks were recorded, but no concentration larger than the 112 counted at Middle River on Sept. 3 by Willis; a very late bird was seen by Willis on Oct. 14. Chimney Swifts left early, the last report being a flock of 35 at Middle River on Oct. 2 (Willis). An especially late Hummingbird was reported from Gibson Island on Oct. 14 by Mrs. Henderson.

Woodpeckers, Flycatchers. Two adult Red-headed Woodpeckers and one brown-headed youngster were observed migrating southward

along the crest of Backbone Mountain on Sept. 16 (Robbins). This same species was noted at Gibson Island on Oct. 11, 17, and 20--the first local record in 7 years (Mrs. Tappan). The Eastern Kingbird normally leaves the mountain and Piedmont sections of the State in late August, but lingers well into September on the Eastern Shore. Late departure dates this year were Sept. 11 at Laurel (Low), Sept. 23 at Seneca (Frank C. Cross), and Sept. 30 at Gibson Island (Mrs. Henderson). Several other flycatchers remained to noteworthy dates: The Crested was seen at White Marsh on Oct. 1 (M.O.S. trip) and Baltimore on Oct. 5 (Ala. Brandenburg). A Wood Pewee seen and heard at Gibson Island on Oct. 31 by Mrs. Henderson is the latest record for Maryland. An Olive-sided Flycatcher seen at Pennyfield on Sept. 30 (Charles N. Mason) was 2 days short of the State record.

Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Wrens. The Raven is definitely on the increase along the western Maryland ridges. Dr. and Mrs. Stauffer obtained their first Sideling Hill records on Sept. 5 and 6, and counted a maximum of 4 there on Sept. 24. Robbins recorded 2 at Roth Rock (where they are now quite regular) on Sept. 17, 2 along the Pennsylvania line at Cross Mountain on Oct. 21, and 2 on Town Hill on the 22nd. The only Red-breasted Nuthatch reported was a single bird at Glenmont on Sept. 24 (Cross). Willis found a late House Wren at Middle River on Oct. 31, and an early Winter Wren on Sept. 23.

Thrushes, Gnatcatchers and Kinglets. The Olive-backed and Gray-cheeked Thrushes were first recorded at Towson on Sept. 5 (Coles). The peak flight on the evening of Sept. 29; Robbins made sample counts of the call notes emanating from migrating thrushes over the city of Laurel between 7:30 p.m. and midnight, and computed that approximately 1,900 Olive-backs and 1,000 Gray-cheeks were audible from outside his apartment. Buckalew picked up a dead Gray-cheeked Thrush as well as the Bicknell's subspecies at Hooper's Island on Oct. 5. The latter constitutes the first record for the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen at Gwynns Falls Park on Sept. 4 by Miss Brandenburg, and a very late bird appeared at Middle River on Sept. 23 (Willis). The first Ruby-crowned Kinglets reached Middle River and Towson on Sept. 17, and Woodside on the 24th. No less than 15 Ruby-crowns together with an early Golden-crown arrived at Middle River on the huge wave of the 24th. On the following day Cross noted his first Golden-crown at Forest Glen.

Waxwings, Shrikes, Vireos. Cedar Waxwings were less common than last year in mid-September, but were nevertheless one of the most conspicuous land birds in the mountain sections. Migrant Shrikes were met with much more frequently than usual, especially on the Eastern Shore. Departure dates for the vireos were as follows: White-eyed, Sept. 19 at Middle River (Willis); Yellow-throated, Sept. 17 at Pennyfield (Cross); Blue-headed, Oct. 22 at Middle River; Red-eyed, Oct. 3 at Middle River; and Philadelphia, Sept. 24 at Forest Glen (Cross). Another Philadelphia Vireo was seen at Middle River on Sept. 17 by Willis.



Warblers. The fall warbler migration was a decided anticlimax following the historic spring flight. Edwin Willis, who made daily observations in the Middle River area, reported that peak movements occurred on Sept. 5-7, 17, and 24--associated in each case with subnormal temperatures. Between these dates minimum temperatures were almost invariably above the seasonal average and only small numbers of migrants were to be found. Few high counts were reported during the fall, but the following obtained by Willis at Middle River on Sept. 24 are worthy of mention: 48 Magnolia Warblers, 12 Black-throated Blues and 35 Black-throated Green Warblers. Several observers found the Redstart particularly abundant over a long period, but numbers dropped off abruptly just after the Sept. 24 cold wave. Except for the brief cold spell during the last week of September, minimum temperatures seldom fell below 50° and the warblers found plenty of insect food well into October. As a result, a number of late departure dates were recorded: Black and White Warbler at Middle River on Oct. 14 (Willis); Worm-eating Warbler at Middle River on Sept. 19 (Willis); Golden-wing at Middle River on Sept. 24 (Willis); Blue-wing at Middle River on Sept. 17 (Willis); Nashville at Beltsville on Oct. 19 (Fales); Black-throated Green at Middle River on Oct. 14 (Willis) and at Forest Glen on Oct. 17 (Cross); 6 Prairie Warblers at Gibson Island on Oct. 10 (Mrs. Vinup); Chat at Gibson Island on Sept. 19 (Vera Henderson) and at Patuxent Refuge on the 22nd (Helen Webster, Arthur Kraeski); Hooded Warbler at Roth Rock Fire Tower in Garrett County on Sept. 17 (Robbins), and at Middle River on the 24th (Willis); and Redstart at Middle River on Oct. 14 (Willis). A Nashville Warbler seen in the Pocomoke swamp east of Willards on the Sept. 10 M.O.S. trip constitutes the second record for this species on the Eastern shore.

Finches and Sparrows. The only late report of a Blue Grosbeak came from Caroline County on Sept. 21 (Roberta Fletcher). The rare Lark Sparrow, which nests to the west of Maryland, mysteriously turns up during the fall migration every few years, and these reports tend to come from coastal areas. A single Lark Sparrow seen at Assateague Island on Oct. 21 by Robert Beaton is the latest fall record for the State. Juncos are not ordinarily seen in the Coastal Plain of Maryland until October, but this year no less than 5 were seen at Gibson Island as early as Sept. 19 (Mrs. Henderson), and another was spotted by Willis at Middle River on the 20th.

Chandler S. Robbins

#### PATAPSCO VALLEY FIELD TRIP, MAY 7

The weather was clear and moderate in temperature. Leaders Irving Hampe and Bob Bowen reported a total of ninety species. Outstanding features of the warbler migration here this year were the unusual number of Chestnut-sided Warblers and the first observation of the Golden-wing in twenty years. Nest-building activity was late. Only one Blue-gray Gnatcatcher had got underway and no oriole building was observed. The most interesting feature of the afternoon trip was the nest and four downy ten-day old curious Red-shouldered Hawks. The nest this year was deeper in the wooded area than last year, due undoubtedly to clearing operations near the old site. They had selected as before the fork of a sycamore tree, about twenty-five feet off the ground.

Ruth E. Lenderking

## BALTIMORE FIELD TRIPS, FIRST HALF OF 1950

Since we have not been carrying write-ups of local field trips this year in Maryland Birdlife, the following gleanings from Miss Burner's very well kept Trip Reports for the first half of 1950 will help recall memorable experiences to those who came, or give some inkling of what was missed by those who did not.

HEAD OF CHESAPEAKE, Jan. 22. Good ducking at Perry Point; none at Carpenter Point. Leaders, Ramsay & Crowder.

CROW ROOST TRIP, Jan. 29. Expert leaders of last year, Drs. Triplett and Lutz, led 32 members well, but found only 700 Crows, warm weather having changed the roosting practice of the tens of thousands usually found at the Silver Run roost.

KENT ISLAND, Feb. 5. Annual popular trip led by Commander Berry; mob of 41 observers checked 55 species on the island, including 2000 Swan.

OCEAN CITY & BLACKWATER, Feb. 18-19. Magnificent trip; see Mr. Springer's story in March-April 1950 issue.

FEEDING STATIONS, Feb. 26. Dr. Lutz led us to the most promising feeders; social & ornithological enjoyment.

CHASE & VICINITY, March 5. See Royals' account in May-June issue.

BUSH RIVER & PERRY POINT, March 12. Only 6 observers turned out, but waterfowl abundant. In all, 49 species of birds were seen. Bob Bowen, leader.

BOMBAY HOOK, March 19. Leader Ernest Baldwin and 15 observers found 53 species, including 8 hawks.

HOPKINS CAMPUS & WYMAN'S PARK, March 26. Bill Green's in-town morning listed 18 species, with many nice observations. Thirteen observers took part.

PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE, April 15. Leader Leonard Llewellyn gave us some memorable close-ups of birds in the banding traps; most notably that of a Coopers Hawk. One of the fine trips of the year, with 25 people learning much.

CONOWINGO, April 23. Storms interrupted the birding, but 54 species were seen between showers, including a raft of 30 Common Loons on the lake. Features of the trip were luncheon at Fourteen Shillings Farm, home of our Harford member, Mrs. Basil M. Gregory; and observations of eagles and eagle nests on the farm of another Harford member, Mr. Silver.

SANDY POINT & SOUTH RIVER, April 30. Commander Berry travels this area for birds regularly, and took us to the high spots of the area, building up a total of 69 species during the tour. Of the 24 who attended, many were Anne Arundel people. Among the birds seen were Common Loon (20), King Rail, Wilson's Snipe, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and 8 species of warblers. A visit to the home of Capt. & Mrs. Compton, of Annapolis, was a feature.

WEEK-DAY EARLY WALKS. The first try at before-work early walks this year proved very successful. Miss Heaps led Tuesday walks for 7 weeks in April and May, principally in Buckler's Woods, between North Avenue and Gwynns Falls Parkway. Mrs. Keastner led Wednesday walks on the same weeks in the Lake Roland area. On Miss Heaps' trips, 16 people saw a total of 89 species; Mrs. Kaestner reported that 43 people attended the Lake Roland walks and checked a total of 79 species. Let's do this every year!

PATAPSCO VALLEY, MAY 7. Leaders Hampe and Bowen, on this popular perennial trip, clocked 90 species.

OCEAN CITY, May 20-21. This is the one trip each year which is frankly a race to see how many species of birds can be seen, and Seth Low is just the man to lead the gallop! Every nook and corner of this rich birding area was worked thoroughly and the final result was the unbelievable but accurate total of 150 species. When we finally added the Black Tern at Rehoboth, some of us were about exhausted, but it was great sport. If you want a quick look at lots of birds, come next year ... and plan to do your detail studying of each species some other time!

WOODSTOCK, May 28. The traditional Cerulean Warbler of the Woodstock area evaded us this year, but the Acadian Flycatchers and plenty of other birds were there, and observations were rewarding. Leaders were Jocelyn and Mrs. Newell and Ray Beasley.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND, June 17-18. Seventy-two species rewarded those who made the last Baltimore Club trip of the season. Of special interest were 7 Least Tern nests with eggs at Cove Point, and a Cedar Waxwing nest on the ground at Charlotte Hall.

Orville Crowder